(d) whether it is a fact that for months together they have not been getting any salary; and

(e) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) In villages, the delivery of mail is effected by Departmental postmen and Gramin Dak Sevaks. Departmental postmen effecting delivery of mail in villages are given salary, LTC, pension and other allowances due and admissible to Central Government employees. Gramin Dak Sevaks effecting delivery of mail in villages are being paid Time Related Continuity Allowance every month. Gramin Dak Sevaks are not eligible for LTC and pension.

(b) Does not arise in view of (a) above.

(c) Gramin Dak Sevaks are not regular Government servants. Therefore, facilities like LTC, pension and other allowances due and admissible to other regular Departmental employees cannot be extended to them.

(d) No, Sir. Departmental postmen and Gramin Dak Sevaks effecting delivery of mail in villages are paid salary and Time Related Continuity Allowance respectively every month.

(e) Does not arise in view of (d) above.

Procurement of GSM handsets by BSNL

1228. SHRI SITARAM YECHURY: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are considering to issue a fresh tender for the procurement of GSM handsets by BSNL;

(b) if so, the reasons for the disposal of existing tender;

(c) the amount of loss incurred and loss of consumer base to BSNL in terms of delay in procuring the GSM handsets; and

(d) the reasons for the delay in procuring the handsets despite the completion of tendering process?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) and (b) Sir, BSNL as a policy does not provide GSM handsets to its subscribers and does not procure the same. However, present tender of 45.5M GSM lines of BSNL is operational and an Advance Purchase Order (APO) has been issued to successful bidder.

(c) The equipment procurement efforts for BSNL's new mobile network expansion project received a setback with one of the bidder approaching the Hon'ble High Court against the decision of BSNL rejecting his bid. BSNL's loss is merely on account of opportunity lost.

(d) An APO has since been issued to one of the successful bidders. The bidder has accepted the offer by submitting Purchase Bank Guarantee (PBG) with some conditions, which are under evaluation. Equipment is expected to be progressively available in about six months time from the date of acceptance of Purchase Order.

Unique software package for e-governance

1229. SHRI SITARAM YECHURY: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are considering to develop a unique software package for its much acclaimed e-governance;

(b) if so, the progress achieved towards that end;

(c) whether Government are considering to incorporate spreading free software developers in development of software packages;

(d) if so, the steps taken in this regard; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) and (b) As approved under the National e-Governance Plan, the focus of e-governance projects is on delivery of services to citizens. Since different Departments provide different services to citizens, businesses and even Government, different applications have been developed by the concerned departments as per their requirements. Departments such as Income Tax, Custom and Excise and MCA have developed applications for their specific requirements, to name a few of the applications developed. The Government has also created a framework for the development of Standards so as to ensure better interoperability between applications of various Government Departments.

(c) to (e) Government maintains a stance of technology neutrality, platform neutrality and vendor neutrality. It has, therefore not prescribed preferential treatment of one over the other.

Electronic Telephone Exchanges

1230. SHRI DWIJENDRA NATH SHARMAH: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) the details of electronic telephone exchanges set up in the country particularly in the State of Assam, during the last three years, State-wise/District-wise/year-wise;

(b) the details of such telephone exchanges proposed to be set up in Assam during this period, location-wise; and

(c) the details of financial grants allocated by Government for this purpose, State-wise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) Sir, details of